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ABSTRACT

The capabilities essential for individual performance and productivity at high levels are major concerns of society. Since human competence can be studied at many levels, the research presented here addresses a higher level of competence (i.e., leadership) and its relationship to early socialization patterns. It was hypothesized that early life experiences either enhance or diminish leadership capacities. To illuminate a possible parent-leader linkage, 447 entering and exiting male and female college students were surveyed to test whether or not a relationship existed between earlier life experiences with parents and adult capacities for leadership. The collected parenting dimension scores and leader trait scores were analyzed to determine their interrelationships. Results show that the greatest magnitude of variance in the dependent variable of leadership was attributable to mother and father acceptance. It is supposed that abundant parental acceptance with limited firm discipline enhances the child's potential capacities for leadership in adulthood. Psychological control tended to diminish leadership capacities. Parental acceptance seems to constitute an ongoing repertoire between parent and children, which includes standards for behavior, activities, responsibility, and performance; and assertiveness without intrusiveness. Implications for this research are discussed. Contains 81 references. (RJM)

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Running Head: The Roots of Leadership

The Roots of Leadership

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This manuscript reflects the findings to date of a five-year research study, "Societal Competence: The Role of Parental Expectations to Individual Prosocial Potential". The Principal Investigator, Dr. Patricia P. Summers, is Associate Professor and graduate faculty in Individual, Child, and Family Development, School of Applied Professional Sciences, South Carolina State University, Campus P.O. Box 7265, Orangeburg, SC 29117, (803-536-8992; fax: 803-536-7102). This investigation is funded by United States Department of Agriculture, Project No. SCX 303-02-93.

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Abstract

Human competence can be studied at many levels, from the basic inheritable level to the broader learned or environmental level. This research addressed a higher level of competence, known broadly as leadership, and its relationship to earlier years socialization patterns. Data were collected from college students to identify perceptions of their parenting experiences that related to acceptance/rejection; psychological-control and autonomy; and firmness versus permissiveness in disciplinary actions. The parent-child interactions were compared to the students' leadership capacities which included leadership, affability, energy, dependability, and resilience. All five leadership traits varied significantly with both mother and father patterns of parenting. Father patterns of acceptance and rejection showed the greatest magnitude of significant effects upon leadership.

Key Words:
Leadership
Competence
Socialization
Parenting Patterns

The Roots of Leadership

Introduction

The capabilities essential for individual performance and productivity at high qualitative levels are major concerns of society. Summers (1990, 1995) postulated that qualities of competence fundamentally rested upon the cognitive and emotional strengths and weaknesses which resulted from the family of origin dynamics. Individual variations of societal competencies are traceable to the early years parent-child patterns of interaction (Amato, 1994; Baumrind, 1989; Brody, 1994, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Clark, 1992; Dornbusch, 1987; Levinson, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Martin, 1993; Ogbu, 1981). Children generally acquire the behaviors, motives, gestures, values, personality traits, and interaction patterns expected by their families of origin in order to adapt, comply and survive. The fortune of a nurturant, healthy, and educated environment tends to provide developmentally appropriate experiences that enrich and facilitate ascendant levels of cognition, emotional responsing, and behavioral outcomes (Amato & Ochiltree, 1986; Baumrind, 1971 & 1989; Bigner, 1994; Kersey, 1986; MacKinnon, 1978; Satir, 1979; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1991; Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988; Werner, 1995). Early years socialization either enhances or diminishes capacities for prosocial leadership, the highest level of human performance and competence.

Problematic is the need for society at large to comprehend the linkage between parenting and leadership. Many research findings, behavioral interventions, and theories can be utilized to build a bridge between childhood socialization experiences and adult leadership capacities (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Covey, 1989; Kaplan, 1990; Larsen, 1993; Levinson, 1994; MacKinnon, 1978; Roe & Lunneborg, 1984). Societal perceptions for parenting and for leadership change with the prevailing economic milieu and subsequent societal values. This investigation

reflects the 1990's zeitgeist.

Literature Overview

Parental Behavior

To develop the point herein, the relevant works of several researchers are synopsized. An extensive literature review was published previously (Summers, 1995). Baumrind (1973, 1989, 1991) compared children who demonstrated higher levels of competence and life successes with those of lesser or problematic levels and concluded that patterns of parenting over time, rather than singular parental actions, influenced the development of the child's behaviors. Parental behaviors, categorized as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive elicited separate and distinctive sets of resulting behaviors, values, and abilities among the children. Of the three patterns, authoritative parents were found most likely to have highly capable, mature, responsible, reliable children with minimal drug and alcohol problems. The parents incorporated into their ongoing repertoire nurturance, acceptance, set expectations, role modeling, inductive reasoning, harmonious milieu, and age-appropriate autonomy.

Leadership Capacities

A second body of literature comes from research conducted at the North Carolina based Center for Creative Leadership. Robert Kaplan (1990) identified a set of dominating workplace behaviors as "expansive character" which he described as the continual desire to achieve in a "big way" with a willingness to expend great energy in the pursuit of mastery and its accompanying rewards. Compulsive motivation for accomplishment and recognition begin with earlier life family of origin strategies that failed to reflect worthiness and appreciation to the child; instead leaving him/her with a fragile sense of self. David Campbell for several decades studied the behaviors and values of successful leaders in the military, academic, and

corporate sectors. Campbell (1985) posited that life experiences can lead one toward leadership potential which again leads one to new experiences that continue in upward spirals. People in all walks of life and all levels of life positions have opportunities to display leadership, which he defines as actions and behaviors that focus tangible plus personal resources upon creating desirable opportunities and goals for the good of all. Campbell (1991) identified common personality traits and states among his thousands of clients that were more reflective of families wherein the children were accepted and recognized as worthy. He collapsed the observed traits into five behavioral leadership components: leadership and creativity, level of energy, affability, dependability and resilience.

Perhaps, the parent-leadership paradigm is best summarized by Covey (1989) who posited that: leadership holds two crucial components: character - what a person is, and competence - what a person does. Human differences create either synergy or dysergy in accordance with values, perceptions, and frames of reference learned from prior experiences. The postulation, herein, that early life experiences either enhance or diminish leadership capacities is represented graphically (Figure 1).

Research Design

To illuminate the parent-leader linkage and to address the need for societal understanding of the linkage, I conducted two research studies. The first showed that 17.2% of the variance in adult leadership was attributable to perceptions of early life parent-child interactions (Summers, 1990). The acceptance/rejection dimension by both parents showed significance in the leadership qualities of likeability and energy. The subjects were 52 U.S. Navy officers.

During 1995 and 1996, I investigated the concept using self-report survey data (N447) collected from students at three smaller South Carolina universities. Academically, 53% were Freshmen and 47% Seniors. The cultural heritage

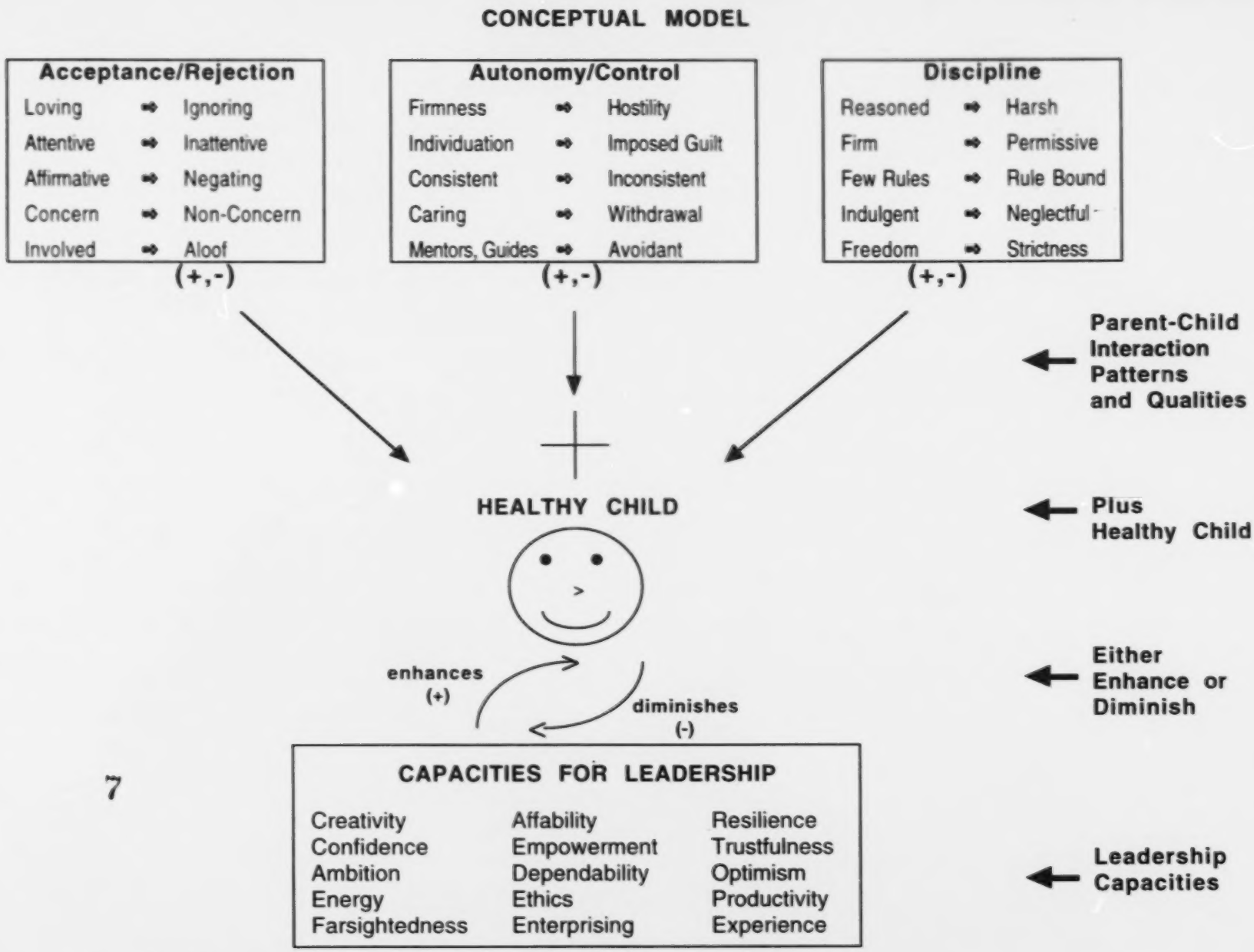

Figure 1. Leadership capacities: Outcomes of parent child interactions

composite reflected 58% African American, 36% Anglo American, and 6% Non-American. Females comprised 56% of the sample and males 42%.

Instrumentation

Independent variables. Three bipolar groupings of interaction patterns that the college students perceived they experienced with their parents while growing up were determined from the Parenting Behavior Inventory (CRPBI-30) (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1988). In this survey, participants responded to an identical 30 statements about each parent via three-point Likert type items. Three dimensions of parenting patterns identifiable from the answers were Acceptance-Rejection, Psychological Control-Autonomy, and Firm-Permissive Discipline. Dimension maximum and minimum raw scores were 30 and 10 respectively; thus scores nearer to thirty indicated higher parental acceptance, control, and firmness. Scores nearer to ten represented more parental rejection, autonomy, and permissiveness.

The reliability coefficients of the CRPBI-30 dimensions ranged from .79 to .89 for mother and father across multiple normative samples of male and female 17-18 year old college freshmen. To assure instrument suitability for cross cultural studies, items inappropriate to ethnic, social, and religious minorities were avoided. Instrument items focused upon the child's relationship with parents (My father/mother... "made me feel better after talking over my worries with him/her"; "told me all the things he/she did for me"; "only kept rules when it suited him/her"; "insisted I must do exactly as I was told"; "let me do anything I liked to do"; "often praised me").

Dependent variables. Five variables of leadership behaviors that the subjects perceived to be within their repertoire were determined by their answers to the Campbell Leadership Index-Self (CLI-Self)(Campbell, 1991). Identified from responses to 100 six-point Likert-type statements were five behavioral orientations for each participant: leadership and creativity, energy, affability, dependability, and

resilience. The orientation factors fall between psychological states that vary (happiness, sadness, anger, calm) to traits more fixed or resistant to change (intelligence, organization). They were selected through principal components analyses and varimax rotation of thirty norming samples of people in rising, seasoned, and plateaued leadership roles. Subjects included college students, military officers, managers, CEO's, and bankers. T50 is the standardized average score for effectively functioning adults. The more naturally occurring patterns of behaviors are identifiable by CLI scores above T50. Less natural tendencies are evidenced by scores below the population mean. CLI reliability and internal consistency were demonstrated via Cronbach Alpha coefficients for orientations (.85) and scales (.72). Test-retest reliability correlations for three-week intervals averaged .86.

To provide standard scores, subjects selected from six categories (always to never) of self descriptive adjectives, examples of which follow:

a) Competitive - likes to take on challenges and win;

b) Dynamic - inspires others through energy and enthusiasm;

c) A leader - takes charge, motivates others;

d) Insightful - able to detect important points in complex situations;

e) Original - thinks and acts in fresh ways;

f) Active - in motion, on the go; and

g) Ethical - lives with society's standards of right/wrong.

3. Demographic Data Survey. Seventeen inquiries yielded data for gender, academic rank, cultural heritage, parents' careers, and other personal information.

Results

Parenting dimension scores and leader trait scores were analyzed via multiple regression to determine the inter-relationships among the 11 variables for each cluster and for the composite. Among the 194 subjects of University "A", the most significant

variances among leader behaviors were attributable to parental acceptance. Mother patterns affected energy (p .001) and creativity/leadership (p .05). Father patterns affected leadership (p .02), affability (p .02), dependability (p .05), and resilience (p .001). Negative (p.05) relationships revealed between a person's dependability and mother's psychological autonomy, and between energy and father's firm discipline.

Interactive effects for University "B" (N127) revealed significance in four mother and two father parenting processes. Attributable at p.10 to the variance in dependability were the mother's acceptance and firm discipline. Affability (p.02) and energy (p.05) varied also with mother's acceptance. Resilience showed the only leader variance for father parenting (autonomy, -p.02; firm discipline, p.05).

For the third group of subjects (University "C"),mother control attributed negatively to dependability (p.02) and resilience (p.02). No other relationships for mother showed significance. Father psychological control positively (p.05) related to leadership/creativity while father acceptance/rejection attributed to resilience (p.001), affability (p.05), energy (p.02), and leadership/creativity (p.05). In summary, for University C (N126), mother parenting affected two leader traits while father parenting affected five traits of leadership.

Data from the three randomized clusters of students (N447) were combined and, again, analyzed to ascertain which patterns of parenting might predict capacities for adult leadership. The magnitude of effects indicated sixteen significant co-variances (Table 1). Acceptance and rejection patterns of parenting for mothers and fathers accounted for 9 of the 16 co-variances with dependent variables. Mother and father discipline co-varied three times, mother with dependability and father with energy and resilience. Mother excess control negatively contributed to dependability and resilience while father control negatively contributed to resilience and positively to leadership/creativity (four co-variances).

Table 1

Significant Beta Coefficients for Variables Predictive of Adult Leadership Capacities Among College Students

	MOTHER (N446)						FATHER (N396)					
Dependent Variables	AR		PCA		FPD		AR		PCA		FPD	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
Leadership	.3203	.1116#					.4396	.1957▼	.4902	.1637**		
Energy	.4239	.1558**					.3701	.1737**			.3480	.1315*
Affability	.4265	.1875▼					.3408	.1913▼				
Dependability	.3307	.1150*	-.5169	-.1549**	.2626	.1015#	.2506	.1112*				
Resilience			-.3770	-.1249*			.5148	.2527▼	-.2732	-.1006#	.2788	.1102#

β Sig T: *p<.05, ** p<.02, ▼ p<.001, # p<.10

AR= Acceptance-Rejection
PCA= Psychological Control-Autonomy
FPD= Firm-Permissive Discipline

Summarization

The greatest magnitude of variance in the dependent variable of leadership was attributable to mother and father acceptance with nine of ten possible predictors holding significance. Dependability and resilience showed four effects (three being negative) from psychological control while energy, resilience, and dependability showed three effects related to firm-permissive discipline (Table 1). It seems logical to deduce that abundant parental acceptance with limited firm discipline enhances the child's potential capacities for leadership in adulthood. Psychological control tended to diminish leader capacities.

This research used retrospective and self report information provided by entering and exiting male and female college students in order to determine whether a relationship existed between earlier life experiences with parents and adult capacities for leadership. Retrospective and self reported data are tightly bound to perception, values, emotion, and information processing, each of which could possibly confound reality. However, gestalt psychologists posit that an individual's perception is his/her reality and it serves as a basis for their needs, values, motivations, and behaviors (Polster, 1974). Regression correlation analyses showed that earlier years acceptance by parents especially played a positive role toward the adult years development of capacities for leader traits.

What is known about parental acceptance? It constitutes an ongoing repertoire between parent and child inclusive of standards for behaviors, activities, responsibility, and performance; assertiveness without intrusiveness; discipline via reasoning rather than punishment; responsiveness to and respect for offspring needs and wants without indulgence. These standards are executed from parental love, concern, nurturance and their own positive self esteem, confidence, and commitment; the home milieu leans toward harmony with regard for a higher spiritual plan of life (Baumrind, 1989;

Martin & Maccoby, 1983; Satir, 1979; Stinnett, 1986). The collective outcomes of the relationships are forms of leadership as societally preferred in the zeitgeist of the 1990's.

Implications from this research point to the societal need for enhanced understanding that adult leaders can be as strong as their childhood foundations, which result largely from the quality of the parents' dedication to their roles. Socialization strategies that build individual and societal competencies must be inextricable from the parenting processes. Given the limited amount of research on this topic, further investigation detailing the synergistic effects between the parenting process and leadership could benefit professionals in leadership, family psychology, pediatrics, social work, education, and other related disciplines.

Note: Role models and mentors in addition to primary caregivers can make contributions to leader capacities. All behaviors are learned and leadership, as behavior, is learnable via study, practice, and coaching. Neither of these avenues of thought were addressed in this research.

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